

### Using the potential of older people in local communities - Experience for Initiatives: results of the Federal Model Programme

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Federal Ministry for  
Family Affairs, Senior Citizens,  
Women and Youth

*senior***Trainerin**  
Erfahrungswissen für Initiativen

Using the Potential of Older People in Local Communities  
– Results of the Federal Model Programme

# “Experience for Initiatives”



## Foreword

Dear Sir or Madam

23 million people in Germany – almost one in three over the age of 14 – are involved in civil society. This is an impressive figure that we talk about far too little. But today we need involvement in civil society more than ever. The state could not perform all of the tasks that young and old do for no money. Voluntary involvement is a very important component of a society with a human face. The power of cohesion and helping each other, caring for each other – this is a commodity that we can and have to bring back to life in involvement in civil society, in voluntary work.



In view of the demographic challenge, the older generation in particular will have an increasingly important role. After the career and family phase it has a great wealth of knowledge gained through experience and time. This potential must be made useful for society. But for this we also need local authorities where the politicians and administrators, responsible parties in educational facilities, associations and voluntary organisations are open to the great demand for self-determined and self-organised involvement by older people.

The model programme “Experience for Initiatives” (EFI) is an important step in this direction: around 1,000 older people have already taken part in courses to be *senior* trainers in order to learn something new and to use their experience in many local projects – for the benefit of all age and population groups locally. “*Senior* expertise teams” become reliable partners and important pace setters for voluntary involvement in local communities. Active *senior* citizens develop creativity, innovation and a willingness to act. They are putting the cycle of give and take between the generations back in motion and, at the same time, are drawing a new picture of old age.

In the years ahead I hope that as many local authorities as possible will set up “*senior* expertise teams” and help to shape forge the way to the civil society.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Ursula v. der Leyen'.

URSULA VON DER LEYEN  
FEDERAL MINISTER FOR FAMILY AFFAIRS, SENIOR CITIZENS,  
WOMEN AND YOUTH

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## “*Senior trainers*” with innovative ideas active in community life

In Jena “*senior trainers*” organise a series of further training courses for *senior* citizens’ supporters; in Arnsberg a cabaret group made up of “*senior trainers*” publicises the involvement of the elderly; in Lübeck “*senior trainers*” launch new projects to promote the use of the new media. “*Senior trainers*” get involved in many ways: whether it is a matter of organising international aid transport, designing PC courses or project to support neighbourhood management in local authorities – “*senior trainers*” are active everywhere and they pass on their expertise and experience to others.

The spectrum of involvement ranges from activities in the social sphere right up to innovative project ideas in culture or politics. The concept for the use of the experience of older people is aimed at older people who are not (only) involved in traditional voluntary work, but who want to contribute their expertise and skills flexibly, shape their involvement for themselves and act as multipliers. “*Senior trainers*” want to help to correct outdated images of old age and to redefine the role of older people in society.

### Editorial

In this brochure, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth is providing information of the results to date of the Federal Model Programme “Experience for Initiatives” (term: 2002 – 2006) and the concept developed to use the knowledge gained through experience of older people. The results presented in many publications are summarised by Joachim Braun, Stefan Bischoff and Silke Brauers, who are responsible for academic support.

The brochure is aimed at anyone who wants to profit from the expertise developed: Local authorities, education providers, agencies for involvement in civil society (volunteers’ associations, senior citizens’ offices, self-help contact points) as well as local bodies that support involvement. Furthermore, older people who want to become involved in new roles of responsibility are also addressed. All publications previously issued by the ISAB Institute and eight project newsletters can be ordered from ISAB Institute, Overstolzstr. 15, 50677 Cologne or downloaded as a PDF document from the EFI website [www.seniortrainer.de](http://www.seniortrainer.de)

Over 3,000 projects across the country now make one thing clear: The activities of “*senior trainers*” are as diverse as their interests and their experience and expertise that they can bring from their professional and family lives.

### Taking responsibility – in four roles



Meeting of the “*senior trainers*” with Mayor Rieger in Meldorf

The diversity of the involvement of the “*senior trainers*” has resulted in four roles of responsibility in which older people contribute their knowledge gained through experience in community life as “*senior trainers*”:

#### Supporters and counsellors

“*Senior trainers*” advise and support existing voluntary organisations and charitable institutions, initiatives, associations and self-help groups, e.g. in solving conflicts, designing communication and group processes, in matters relating to organisation and finance, in attracting volunteers, etc.

#### Initiators of new projects

“*Senior trainers*” develop project ideas and instigate new projects, groups or initiatives.

#### Networkers in community life

“*Senior trainers*” carry out interdisciplinary activities to promote voluntary involvement in their local areas, e.g. organising citizenship circles, founding councils of *senior* citizens, etc.

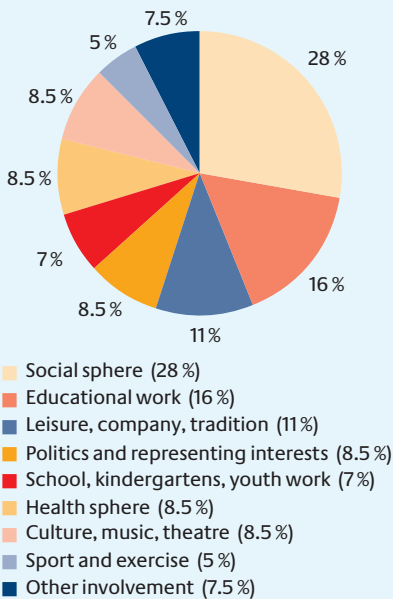
#### Team coordinators, moderators

“*Senior trainers*” support the self-organisation of the “*senior trainers*” and “*senior expertise teams*” and perform organisational, conceptual or moderating tasks.

Many “*senior trainers*” are active in one or more roles at the same time. They pass on their knowledge gained through experience in various ways, e.g. by performing advisory tasks in an existing organisation (for example, in public relations) and by helping to advance the establishment of a new initiative (e.g. by attracting sponsors or active participants). Evaluation shows that past experience with civil involvement has an impact on the choice of role profile:

■ “*Senior trainers*” with many years of experience in involvement are mainly active in supporting established associations and organisations, and they are also comparatively over-represented in networking civil involvement in the local community.

Areas of involvement of “*senior trainers*” (in %)



By contrast, “*senior* trainers” with less experience of involvement are more likely than others to be involved in initiating new projects and as lecturers, trainers and contemporary eyewitnesses.

**“It’s a bit like going to the disco – you feel so alive”**

What does it mean for “*senior* trainers” to take on responsibility in a new role? For many, the key factor is being able to pass on their own experience and expertise and to instigate projects locally. Doing something in the local community, doing something for the common good, making life more active – these are just a few of the aspects that “*senior* trainers” cite. And even more: Having contact with other people, increasing one’s own feeling of self-worth, keeping up an enjoyment of life, in short: Doing something for oneself is becoming increasingly important. When asked by a younger person why he started so many different projects as a “*senior* trainer”, Rainer Dix answered: “I just enjoy it, it’s a bit like going to the disco – you feel so alive!”



“*Senior* trainer” Jürgen Tippner in advisory talks with a self-help group

## Impetus from “*senior* trainers”

With their involvement, “*senior* trainers” take up neglected areas of need in their local communities, set up new projects, launch initiatives and support existing organisations and institutions. In the process they succeed in making other people enthusiastic about their ideas and motivating them to volunteer. “*Senior* trainers” thus act as pace-makers and multipliers for civil involvement in their local communities. They promote social cohesion with their involvement. They create new everyday solidarity, develop new means of participation and involvement by the public and thus make a valuable contribution to enhance the quality of life in the local communities.

The role image of the “*senior* trainers” has started a change in trends within the voluntary sector. The involvement of the “*senior* trainers” does not require a fixed connection to an institution. Much rather, it is characteristic of “*senior* trainers” that they want to be supported “on the job”. They experience this support in self-organised “*senior* expertise teams”, where the “*senior* trainers” have come together to form a community, and in cooperation with the local contact point.

### Further information:

Knowledge Gained Through Experience and Responsibility – on the Role of “*Senior* Trainers” in Selected Areas of Involvement (Expert Opinion of the Scientific Advisory Council in the Federal Model Programme)

ISAB Reports No. 89.

Available from: ISAB Institute  
Overstolzstr. 15, 50677 Cologne  
E-mail: [isab@isab-institut.de](mailto:isab@isab-institut.de)



## The Federal Model Programme “Experience for Initiatives” is showing results

### Developing new images of old age with “senior trainers”

Around 1,000 older people in 35 local authority areas take responsibility in their local communities by making their knowledge and expertise available as “senior trainers”. They incorporate into their involvement their diverse experience from working and family life and knowledge from training in the courses that accompany the programme.

The Federal Model Programme has thus heralded a successful about-turn: Instead of viewing older people as risk factors for the future quality of life in the local authority areas, they are appreciated as a valuable resource that enriches the interaction of all.

### Positive response

“Thanks to my qualification as a “senior trainer”, my involvement in civil society has taken on a new quality and changed. For example, it can be seen in more self confidence and courage for larger projects and in a greater appreciation for my voluntary work.”

Dr Renate Billinger-Kromm,  
“senior trainer” for Rostock

The public relations of the Federal Model Programme is taking effect: The courses were oversubscribed by a factor of four. The demand by organisations in the voluntary sector for support by “senior trainers” is rising continuously. People with responsibility and decision-makers from politics and administration are increasingly identifying themselves with the aims of the programme and act as multipliers. The establishment of the concept to use the knowledge gained through experience of older people was an important step towards a new image of old age.

Among other things, continuous information on the EFI homepage and at public events of the scientific alliance that accompanied the Federal Model Programme contributed to this success. The following are members of the alliance:

- Project coordination, advice, support: Institut für Sozialwissenschaftliche Analysen und Beratung (ISAB)
- Curriculum development: Neubrandenburg University
- Evaluation: Institut für Sozialforschung und Gesellschaftspolitik (ISG)



Five central specialist conferences on the Federal Model Programme with an average of 200 participants have helped the concept of the use of the knowledge gained through experience of older people to take hold among the German public. The specialist conferences were dedicated to various key issues (cf. [www.seniortrainer.de](http://www.seniortrainer.de)):

- 2002: Inaugural event and workshops for those involved in the programme
- 2003: Internet – for an active old age: Information and orientation assistance for *senior* citizens
- 2004: Taking stock at half-way point and prospects for the model programme “Experience for Initiatives”
- 2005: Public involvement and taking responsibility in old age
- 2006: Knowledge gained through experience of the elderly – of benefit to all generations

Many contact points go into the public arena with their own strategies and projects in order to be able to show locally what “*senior* trainers” do: Presentations at local events, innovative press and public relations work and targeted addressing of important decision-makers mean that a broad discussion about elderly people in community life has been set in motion in many places.

But that was not enough: “*senior* trainers” and “*senior* expertise teams” take action themselves to be perceived in public. They present their projects, achievements and offers of support in the local press. Visits to the institutions and organisations, information stands at trade fairs and events and innovative websites mean that the model concept has met with interest beyond the current locations.

Communication and exchange are among the most important aspects of “*senior* trainer” activities. In response to the question “What has been your greatest success to date?” “*senior* trainer” Werner Thürauf from Kaiserslautern says: “For me, success is making contact with lots of people, both with the public and decision-makers. Success is the lots of little things, ideas and projects that have been initiated and implemented. Success is the recognition and acceptance of my involvement by the public, for whom I can stand up.”



“*Senior* trainers” and agency employees, 5<sup>th</sup> Würzburg Health Day



Start of the nationwide balloon campaign for the EFI Programme at the Gendarmenmarkt in Berlin

## “Knowledge gained through experience does not come out of the blue”

This was the motto of a nationwide balloon campaign, involving over 200 “*senior trainers*” from 26 local authority areas together with the agencies for involvement in civil society. The campaign was triggered by the “Week of Civil Involvement” in September 2004 initiated by the Federal Network of Civil Involvement (BBE). As part of this campaign, “*senior trainers*” showed that knowledge gained through experience “does not come out of the blue”, but that has already been incorporated in many projects, initiatives and campaigns across all areas of volunteering.

Many press and radio reports, photos and reports show that they have succeeded in this impressively ([www.seniortrainer.de](http://www.seniortrainer.de)). Many local campaigns were supported by prominent regional and local politicians, decision-makers from the administration, associations and many citizens who came to find out what potential there was among the “*senior trainers*”.

## Ambassadors for a new image of old age



“*Senior trainers*” Christa Pidun in working talks with future senior supporters

Nevertheless, there are challenges for the future: A willingness to open up to new forms of involvement is by no means a matter of course in organisations, institutions and local decision-makers. The sustainable enshrinement of positive images of old age and new roles in old age is only achievable in the longer term.

“*Senior trainers*” act positively as ambassadors for a positive image of old age. They show that older people can take responsibility for community life and thus have a place in the midst of society. Their knowledge from experience is extremely valuable. Old people demonstrate the solidarity of the generations in their lives and make it clear that involvement with others gives life a meaning and enhances enjoyment of life.

### Further information:

A press clippings section with examples of the local response in the media can be found in the “Public Relations and Reports” section of [www.seniortrainer.de](http://www.seniortrainer.de).

## Encouraging older people to become involved again: Core elements of the concept to use the knowledge gained through experience of older people

The involvement of around 1,000 “*senior* trainers” and the conceptual development of new roles of responsibility where older people incorporate their knowledge gained through experience in the voluntary sector of the local area independently and organised by themselves are the result of the concept for using the knowledge gained through experience of older people that has been successfully tried out within the scope of the Federal Model Programme “Experience for Initiatives” (2002–2006). The Federal Model Programme was developed by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth in cooperation with ten *Länder* and has been successfully implemented in 35 local authority areas.

### Knowledge gained through experience – a valuable resource

The concept for using the knowledge gained through experience of older people aims to develop the knowledge gained through experience of the older people for initiatives, voluntary organisations and institutions with the new responsible role of “*senior* trainer” and “*senior* expertise teams” and to bring together the “*senior* trainers” of a local authority area. The central achievement of the concept lies in attracting the older people, in training them, in their deployment as “*senior* trainers” and in setting up “*senior* expertise teams”.

On the basis of a newly developed further training concept, older people are trained to be “*senior* trainers” and then become active in community life. This concept creates responsible roles for older people in local communities that open up new perspectives and ways of incorporating knowledge and experience gained at work, in families and in voluntary work in community life as “*senior* trainers”.

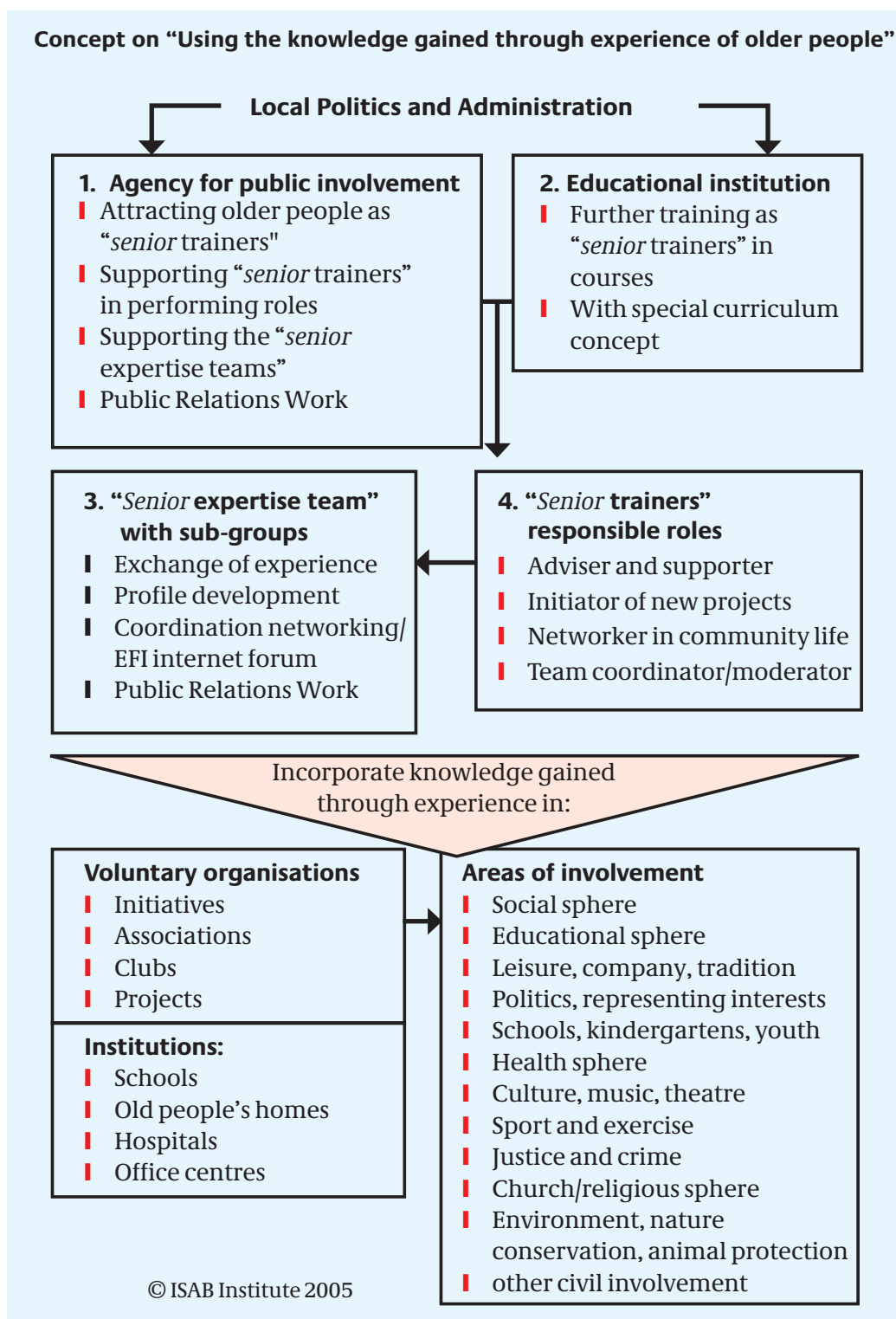
Local networks are necessary for implementation of the concept. They comprise local contact points or agencies for public involvement (voluntary agencies, senior citizens’ offices, self-help contact points), education providers and the actors relevant for promoting involvement.

This union of politics, administration, civil society, associations,



“*Senior* trainers” at the German Senior Citizens’ Day 2003 talking with interested parties at the EFI stand

organisations, industry and private sponsors as well as social institutions has developed new fields of action in order to take account of the changed general conditions of an ageing population. The Federal Model Programme “Experience for Initiatives” has impressively demonstrated that this “mobility” of older people revealed can lead to further reaching “movement” of older people towards taking responsibility for living together in society.



## Successful troika: Agencies for civil involvement, educational institutions and “*senior* trainers” or “*senior* expertise teams”

The concept is implemented locally in close cooperation with various partners. They include a local agency for public involvement (senior citizens’ office, self-help contact point, voluntary agency, etc.), an educational institution, the “*senior* trainers” and the “*senior* expertise team” as a contact point.

The contact point for civil involvement has the task of attracting interested older people to become involved as “*senior* trainers” and to support the “*senior* trainers” in their involvement and in setting up “*senior* expertise teams”. With targeted public relations work it helps the knowledge gained through experience of the “*senior* trainers” to be perceived and used in the local area.

The educational institution conducts the further training course for involvement as a “*senior* trainer”. Future “*senior* trainers” are prepared to exercise their new roles of responsibility. For this purpose the educational institution has a tried and tested course concept developed for the further training of “*senior* trainers”. As part of the model programme, the “*senior* trainer” finally receives the *senior* citizens’ voluntary work card (Seneka). It acts as an identity card and proof of training and provides insurance cover while the relevant activity is being performed.

The local “*senior* expertise team” acts as the central coordination point of the “*senior* trainers”. There, they exchange experience, support each other, develop joint projects and inform the public about their activities. This form of self-organisation is an elementary component of the concept.

The “*senior* trainers” are involved in a broad spectrum of voluntary organisations and institutions in various areas of involvement. They incorporate their knowledge gained through experience by providing advice and support for existing initiatives and organisations, develop and initiate new projects, reinforce or set up networks and take on organisational or moderating tasks in “*senior* expertise teams”.

## Four aspects clarify the challenges when using the knowledge gained through experience of older people:



1. Attracting older people to the responsible role of “*senior* trainer” and to pass on their knowledge gained through experience

Social change is taking place within the older generation. New generations of older people are coming up with different biographical experiences (e.g. social movements of the 1960s and 1970s) and these result in different attitudes and expectations of the post-career phase of life. Many older people have a high degree of resources

and skills. For the post-war generation in particular, the so-called “young old” or “baby boomers”, retirement is not an adequate perspective. They want to make sensible use of the time gained after the career or family phase. The concept of using the knowledge gained through experience of older people opens up new perspectives to these older people to make their knowledge gained through experience useful to themselves and society.

2. Further training for interested older people to be “*senior* trainers”

The role of “*senior* trainer” requires a high degree of initiative and reflexivity as well as knowledge and insight into the local voluntary scene. Previous knowledge gained through experience is reflected in the further training, personal development opportunities are discussed and role- and project-specific knowledge taught. The aim of further training is to support older people in the process of finding their role and preparing them to perform the “*senior* trainer” role. For this purpose, Neubrandenburg University has developed a curriculum that can be implemented flexibly in fourteen modules.



### 3. Creating opportunities and applications for the involvement of “*senior* trainers”

One key prerequisite for older people to be able to incorporate their knowledge gained role of “*senior* trainers” is the further development of the local involvement culture and the opening up of the voluntary sector to new roles of responsibility. Public relations work and networking are very important to set into motion a wide-ranging discussion process on the role of older people in community and new forms of voluntary involvement.

### 4. Self-organisation of “*senior* trainers” in local “*senior* expertise teams”

The self-organisation of the “*senior* trainers” is very important in the concept for the use of the knowledge gained through experience of older people. The basis for this is the bringing together of and cooperation between the “*senior* trainers” in a local authority area in “*senior* expertise teams”. There, information and experience is changed, new projects are developed and public relations work is conducted jointly.

In the Federal Model Programme a nationwide network of “*senior* trainers” and the project players involved has been established in order to enable a continuous exchange of experience and networking, e.g. by internet communication. In particular, the “*senior* expertise teams” at local level are an example of innovative forms of involvement with a signal effect by bundling expertise and knowledge.



#### Further information:

Bischoff, S./Braun, J./Olbermann, E. (Ed.): “Leitfaden für die Nutzung des Erfahrungswissens Älterer als *senior* Trainerinnen und in *senior* Kompetenzteams”

ISAB Reports No. 90.

Available from: ISAB Institute

E-mail: [isab@isab-institut.de](mailto:isab@isab-institut.de)



## Learning to teach knowledge gained through experience: Further training for older people to be “*senior trainers*”

### Prerequisite for new involvement: Qualification

Passing on knowledge gained through experience – that is far from an easy task. For many it is a particular challenge: The patterns for action that future “*senior trainers*” have acquired in their families, careers or voluntary involvement in the past cannot always be implemented one-to-one in the voluntary sector. In addition to a willingness to adapt to a completely new context if necessary, reflection and other knowledge and skills are needed that help the individual to contribute his/her knowledge gained through experience specifically for target groups and in a way appropriate to the subject. Starting from this core concern, Neubrandenburg University has developed a curriculum that has been successfully tested and continuously optimised within the Federal Model Programme “Experience for Initiatives”.

### 14 components of the further training

1. Getting to know each other
2. Four role profiles as “*senior trainer*”
3. Changing society
4. Age(ing) in a changing world
5. Civil involvement
6. Support for public involvement
7. Contact, talks, moderation
8. Experience phase/profile sketches
9. Involvement as initiative advisor
10. Involvement as project developer
11. Involvement as networker
12. Involvement as team coordinator
13. Public relations work and fund-raising
14. Our role profile as “*senior trainer*”

The course concept aims to support educational institutions in tapping into the knowledge and skills (knowledge gained through experience) as well as motives and interest in involvement for fixed-term involvement in the voluntary sector by means of thematic and methodological recommendations. The future “*senior trainers*” find their role in learning settings with the profile that matches them, which they can then articulate and implement in fields of civil involvement. The 14 modules are an offer for the thematic breakdown and chronological sequence of the course programme and can be adapted flexibly to the different general conditions. The core terms of further training are reflection and qualification. The qualification course contains two aspects: The course participants

- Should develop and expound an appropriate role profile for their (new) role of responsibility as “*senior trainers*” together with others (experience and reflection aspect), taking account of their (role) experience and their knowledge gained through experience of “role making” and
- Should be able to enhance and expand their knowledge, ability and skills towards future activities in the field of civil involvement (qualification aspect).

Training older people into “*senior trainers*” is offered by local or supra-regional educational institutions in close cooperation with the local contact point.

The course contains around 50 teaching hours and an integrated “experience phase” of approx. 14 days – depending on the local opportunities – but the length can be extended and the time forms (compact with overnight stays, etc.) can be changed. A spread of the 50 teaching hours over a total of eight teaching days of six teaching hours each is recommended. This means that good learning success and the social side of learning (getting to know other people, group processes, learning in groups, etc.) can be encouraged.

In addition to reflection processes, the further training starts from the existing knowledge and skills. Starting with their existing knowledge gained through experience, more knowledge should be gained that is useful as general background knowledge and for use in the voluntary sector as well as for the older participants to use in orientation of their own lives. Furthermore, any existing specialist skills should be expanded that may be of help to them in their involvement in the voluntary sector.

In conjunction with a practical “experience phase” lasting around two weeks, the participants are given the opportunity to bring individual ideas and shared experience together with what they have learned and to see and evaluate their future role profile from various perspectives.

In the Model Programme, local networks have proved to be particularly sensible for the further training of older people for involvement as “*senior trainers*” in the voluntary sector. The opportunities of networking local or supraregional education providers with the local agencies for civil involvement are mainly to be found in the fact that the agencies for civil involvement have thorough knowledge of the local voluntary sector. The course participants thus become familiar with civil involvement in their local area: General conditions, structures, sponsorship, etc. Furthermore, the participation of the local contact point as an educational partner supports the future “*senior trainers*” on the spot in their activities.

Moreover, local groups, initiatives and associations are part of the immediate environment of the further training network. They report on their work and become the participants’ partners in the experience phase.

“I was given a good foundation for working in various projects. I feel more confident as a ‘senior trainer’. It means belonging to a community of like-minded people.”

“*Senior trainer*” Marianne Schrade,  
Ludwigshafen



**How do “*senior* trainers” assess the further training once they have successfully completed it? What do they think they have learned?**

The feedback of “*senior* trainer” Werner Thürauf from Kaiserslautern reflects the opinion of many: “I have learned to listen. That’s something that’s actually hard for me! Contact and communication with people are easy for me. The “*senior* trainer” courses have helped me to improve this skill. I have also learned to delegate responsibility and to accept and appreciate the knowledge and experience of my colleagues as a team player.”

“*Senior* trainer” Waltraud Kolter, also from Kaiserslautern, comes to a similar conclusion: “As I set up my project two months before my training as a “*senior* trainer”, the three course modules were of great help to me. Mastering conflicts in a group, team work and expanding the horizon by getting to know like-minded people and the resultant exchange of experience were of benefit to me.”

**Further information:**

Burmeister, J./Heller, A./Stehr, J.:  
„Weiterbildung älterer Menschen  
für bürgerschaftliches Engagement  
als *senior*Trainerinnen: Ein Kurs-  
konzept für lokale Netzwerke“

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## “We are getting involved!” – “*senior* expertise teams” as important cornerstones of the community of citizens

Team work is a matter of course for “*senior* trainers”. In many of the local authority areas involved in the Federal Model Programme, the “*senior* trainers” have come together to form “*senior* expertise teams”. In this way they have created a structure in which they reflect, organise, shape and publicise their involvement with their own organisation and under their responsibility as a team – in addition to their individual projects and activities in community life.

In “*senior* expertise teams”, the skills of the individuals are bundled together and a joint profile is developed. Mutual encouragement, an exchange of information and experience and the joint development of new project ideas are made possible: In regular meetings, problems in the implementation of individual projects are discussed and possible solutions are developed. Frequently, this leads to innovative project and design ideas that are implemented in joint projects and campaigns.

“The expertise team bundles and enhances the individual opportunities and can thus considerably expand the action radius and effectiveness of “*senior* trainers,” said Dr Peter Zeman, member of the Academic Advisory Council in the Federal Model Programme “Experience for Initiatives”.

The emphases of the teams are just as different as the local general conditions.

The organisational forms and focuses of the “*senior* expertise teams” differ according to the existing structures, the interests and skills of the individuals and specific regional features (e.g. town and country). Here is an example from Meldorf in Dithmarschen: “*Senior* trainer” Achim Krumbiegel said “The West Coast ‘*senior* expertise team’ was made up of 18 “*senior* trainers” who received further training for the new role of responsibility in three courses. At first, they worked on their own, sometimes small, projects. But everything is different today! All trained “*senior* trainers” make up the ‘*senior* expertise team’. Separate, smaller expertise teams are formed for individual projects; they are headed by a project

**Achieving more together:  
Team work is in demand**



The Havelland “*senior* expertise team” with the head of the expertise centre



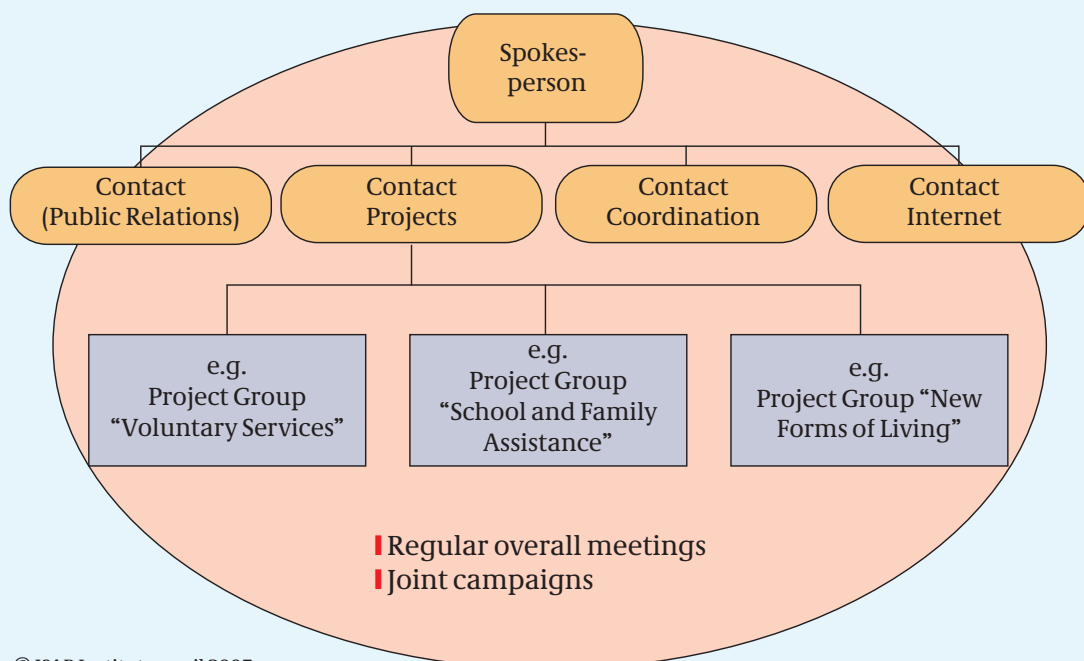
Meeting of the Fürth “senior expertise team”

manager.” Another example: In 2005 the “senior expertise team” Nuremberg/Fürth set up a new “Centre for Active Citizens” on behalf of the City. Project manager Felix Trejo saw it as an excellent task for team development: “The pioneering achievement of realising a completely new contact point needs lots of different talents that have to interact.”

## Self-organisation – A factor for success in the Federal Model Programme

“Senior expertise teams” have helped to establish “senior trainers” as permanent and recognised components of the local authority culture of involvement. With joint campaigns, they enhance their profile and thus not only publicise the “senior trainer” role, but also the offers of involvement and the potentials of the local “senior expertise teams”. The most important characteristic: “senior trainers” organise themselves. They become active under their own responsibility – in cooperation with the local contact point.

## Organisation model “senior expertise team”



“*Senior* expertise teams” are thus an important cornerstone of the community of citizens. They

- Contribute to the continuation and further development of the “*senior* trainer” role,
  - Offer a platform for individual learning processes and personality development,
  - Strengthen and support the individual involvement of the “*senior* trainers”,
  - Promote the public perception, recognition and use of the knowledge gained through experience of older people,
  - Open up new opportunities for the participation of older people in local communities
- and
- Tap into local areas of need.

### Networking as a challenge for “*senior* expertise teams”

Networking with the local infrastructure, existing associations and initiatives, local authority bodies and the local media is to the fore for the “*senior* expertise teams”. But they also look “beyond the ends of their noses”: Increasing numbers of “*senior* expertise teams” are becoming involved beyond the local environment and in the supraregional and national exchange of experience between “*senior* trainers”.

To implement the concept for the use of knowledge gained through experience in the long term, a nationwide association of “*senior* expertise teams” will be founded in 2006. This has set itself the goal of advancing the local self-organisation processes by networking the “*senior* expertise teams” and giving impetus to the founding of “*senior* expertise teams” in other local authority areas.

#### Further information:

Information on the organisation, way of working and achievements of the “*senior* trainers” and the “*senior* expertise teams” can be found on the website [www.seniortrainer.de](http://www.seniortrainer.de) in the area “*senior* trainers” in practice.

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## Using knowledge gained through experience: Local authorities respond to the challenges of demographic change

“In future, we will continue to make civil involvement marketable and develop new images of old age and roles of responsibility in our own interest together with the experts. We want to promote and secure self-organisation with positive role definitions and the self-image of the older generation in a city of long life.”

Hans-Josef Vogel,  
Mayor of Arnsberg

Nationwide, local authorities are seeking strategies for dealing creatively with demographic change. They have recognised that falling birth rates, the rising number of older people and increased migration are challenges that they will increasingly have to face up to. At the same time, the number of older people who want to give to their local communities in new forms of involvement is rising.

But what do application training courses for young people at state schools, the implementation of alternative living space projects or the usage concept of local authority senior citizens' advisory council have in common?

They came about because of project ideas of “*senior trainers*” and are the expression of a rethink in local authorities: the experience of life, expertise, knowledge and the time that older people have at their disposal are understood as an opportunity and motor for social change: Older people as a valuable resource in local authorities – a utopia for the future? Far from it.

### Cities and Districts with “*Senior Trainers*” (35)

■ Aachen	■ Kassel
■ Arnsberg	■ Lathen
■ Augsburg	■ Ludwigshafen
■ Cologne	■ Lübeck
■ Cottbus	■ Meldorf
■ Dillendorf	■ Minden
■ Dreieich	■ Mühlendorf
■ Düsseldorf	■ Neubrandenburg
■ Edewecht	■ Neumünster
■ Eisenach	■ Nuremberg
■ Erfurt	■ Prenzlau
■ Frankfurt/Main	■ Rathenow
■ Germering	■ Regensburg
■ Hamburg	■ Rostock
■ Hanover	■ Schwerin
■ Herford	■ Trier
■ Jena	■ Würzburg
■ Kaiserslautern	

## Older people are important motors for civil involvement in the local community

The Federal Model Programme “Experience for Initiatives” has clearly shown in 35 local communities in ten Federal Länder what creative strategies for dealing with demographic change could look like. Thanks to the civil involvement of “*senior trainers*” and local “*senior expertise teams*”, the potential of older people is used innovatively in the local community and thus made visible. Older people take responsibility in the local community by taking up the need in their community, advising associations, initiatives and social institutions, instigating new projects, attracting more dedicated people and networking existing projects. The concept for using the knowledge gained through experience of older people shows the local authorities ways in which they can use the potential of older people in community life more than in the past and develop resource-oriented responses to demographic change.



Both towns and rural districts report of positive experience. “Our “*senior trainers*” represent a self-confident generation of people with experience of life who volunteer and who are actively and noticeably shaping community life in the Havelland district across the generations,” according to the Head of Social Services on the Havelland district, Ms von Fintel. “We are very proud of the future expertise centre for civil involvement, which is largely borne by the involvement of the “*senior expertise teams*” of the “*senior trainers*”. It gives further impetus to civil involvement in the Havelland district.”



Campaign of “*senior trainers*” with representatives of local and *Land* politics

## Strong ally: Agencies for civil involvement as local contact points

Local authorities are increasingly turning to existing structures to cope with demographic change, in order to set up and support initiatives and projects. “*Senior trainers*” and “*senior expertise teams*” are an important resource and support for this. One prerequisite for older people to be able to incorporate their knowledge gained through experience in the new responsible role of “*senior trainers*” is the further development of the local involvement culture. The local contact point plays a central role in this context: Together with the “*senior trainers*” it initiates a discussion process for the role of older people in community life and thus helps the knowledge gained through experience of older people to be in stronger demand and recognised.

## New means of cooperation and implementation of the programme structure

A typical example is a project organised by the Nuremberg “*senior trainers*” with the title “Opening Doors”. With this project the “*senior trainers*” want to build bridges between business and civil involvement. In the so-called “Caring Days”, employees of Middle Franconian companies are released to take on civil activities.

The project ideas are developed by “*senior trainers*” together with representatives of the companies. “The profile of “*senior trainers*” could



have been made for tasks of this kind: Project development, networking, coordination – all skills are required,” says Dr Thomas Röbbke, Institute for Social and Cultural Work in Nuremberg.

Finding new means of cooperation and concluding partnerships by means of “*senior trainers*” and „*senior expertise teams*“ – this ‘added value’ is confirmed by many local communities involved in the Federal Model Programme. Because of the far-reaching success, a broad-based information campaign was launched to attract more towns and districts to apply the concept for using the knowledge gained through experience of older people. The general conditions for the establishment of appropriate infrastructures are to be created in 20 municipalities with the support of the ISAB Institute.

The positive response to the information campaign proves that the Federal Model Programme has laid the foundation for a large-scale implementation of the concept in Germany.

#### Further information:

The addresses and contacts of the 35 agencies for civil involvement in the Model Programme can be found on the internet page of the ISAB Institute for the EFI Programme: [www.seniortrainer.de](http://www.seniortrainer.de) in the section “EFI players”



## “*Senior trainers*” as ambassadors for positively dealing with the new media

“You hear talk of links and modems, of www, dot, comma, hyphen. The subject might not be everyone’s cup of tea. But things are impossible without it. (...) Don’t spoil your fun, there’s plenty that’s enjoyable online. We oldies want to enjoy it too, that’s why we surf: It’s child’s play!” – that is the view of “*senior trainer*” Herbert Kramer from Arnsberg on the new media.

The Federal Model Programme has sent out a signal and, with many active “*senior trainers*”, has helped the new media to be viewed more positively as a resource than as an irritation by the older population. Not only the many projects that “*senior trainers*” have started in their communities demonstrate this: From the establishment of internet cafes for senior citizens right up to PC advice for small initiatives. And within the group of “*senior trainers*” the new media are increasingly being used as an important instrument of communication.

The website **www.seniortrainer.de** has been published as a central information base in order to encourage the exchange of experience and information between all of the players in the Federal Model Programme “Experience for Initiatives”. A discussion forum in the internet was called into being as a platform for the exchange of “*senior trainers*” and for those who want to advance the discussion about the role of older people in society at Land and Federal level by means of impetus and ideas (entry: **www.seniortrainer.de**).

Furthermore, within the context of the Federal Model Programme, a central specialist conference in Berlin was dedicated to the subject “Internet – for an active old age”. Fundamental aspects of the use of the internet and the opportunities of the internet for the social participation of older people were identified. How can the internet be used for active lifestyle design and for civil involvement in old age? “*Senior trainers*” presented their internet projects and identified ways in which access to and use of the internet could be facilitated for older people. Because of the great interest in this subject, a CD-ROM was made that contains specific tips and information in this regard.



“*Senior trainer*” Helmut Rössler supports older people working on computers

With the help of training materials (teaching CD, guidelines, flyers) and instructions: “*senior* trainers” with experience of the internet from the internet supporter group were given help so that barriers could be overcome.

[illegible]



## The knowledge gained through experience of older people activated – results of accompanying research

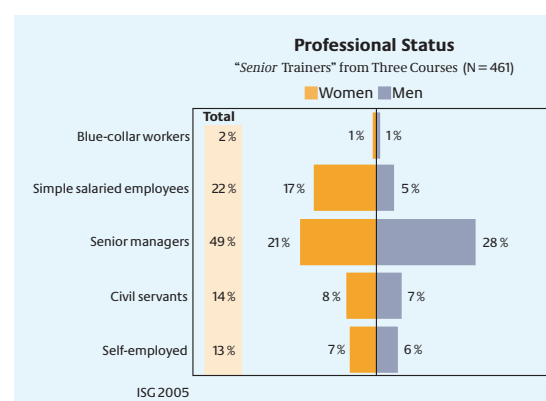
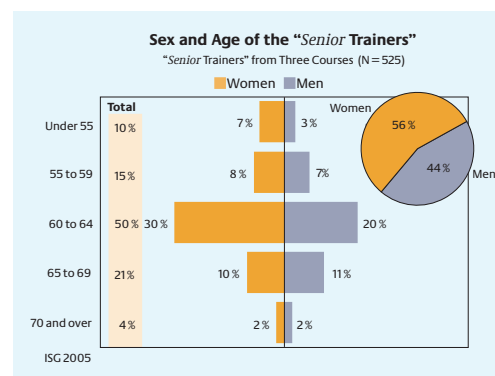
The success of the Federal Model Programme is demonstrated by the results of the accompanying research. An overview of all “*senior trainers*” shows that the age range of the “*senior trainers*” extends from 55 to 70 and older. The ‘young old people’ aged between 60 and 65 with a higher educational status feel particularly addressed by the concept of the use of knowledge gained through experience of older people. Graduates who mostly worked in leading positions as managers, civil servants or who were self-employed are especially strongly represented. Slightly more women (56%) than men (46%) take part in the courses to be “*senior trainers*”. This corresponds to their proportion in the older population.

The surveys conducted by the Institute for Social Research and Social Policy (ISG) (Dr Dietrich Engels) show that most “*senior trainers*” become active with involved organisations from the voluntary sector after the further training and implement the ideas and projects developed in the course.

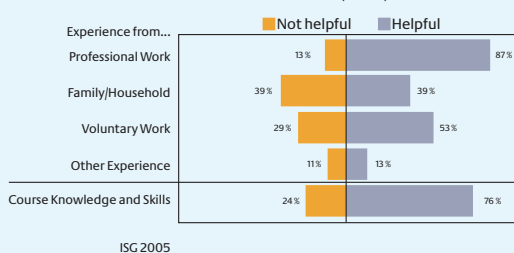
The vast majority of “*senior trainers*” confirms the great benefit of the further training concept: Almost all participants feel that the course has equipped them for the activity as a “*senior trainer*”. The knowledge in building up contacts and exchanging experience as well as knowledge about communication, conducting talks, project organisation, cooperation and networking are particularly helpful for the subsequent role as a “*senior trainer*”.

For four out of five “*senior trainers*” the transition to practice goes without a hitch: Following the further training they start a specific activity as a “*senior trainer*” and are active as a “*senior trainer*”. On average, the “*senior trainers*” are active in their involvement for seven hours per week, mainly in social spheres and in educational work. Other activities concentrate on leisure groups, political involvement, involvement in the health sector and on work with children and young people.

### Positive feedback of the “*senior trainers*”



**Use of Experience Gained from Experience and Courses**  
2003 Course in Practice (N = 110)



Many “*senior trainers*” are often active in several roles at the same time. Initiating new projects and groups as well as supporting and advising existing organisations and initiatives are among the most frequently selected tasks. Their own experience and the skills acquired in the course prove to be very helpful in practice. Good use can be made of professional skills in particular.

The results of the accompanying research are published in detail in the concluding report on the Federal Model Programme “Experience for Initiatives”.

### Three ongoing research projects deal with specific effects of the Federal Model Programme:

In a cross-sectional study International University Bremen (Prof. Dr Ursula M. Staudinger) noted that participation in the EFI Programme is associated with increased well-being and greater motivation than among other volunteers. However, this greater motivation is limited if the “*senior trainers*” do not experience enough self-determination in their projects. Self-determination is also a prerequisite for the willingness for new experiences – a characteristic that usually declines with age. The social integration and teaching important skills has a positive effect on the personality development of the “*senior trainers*”.

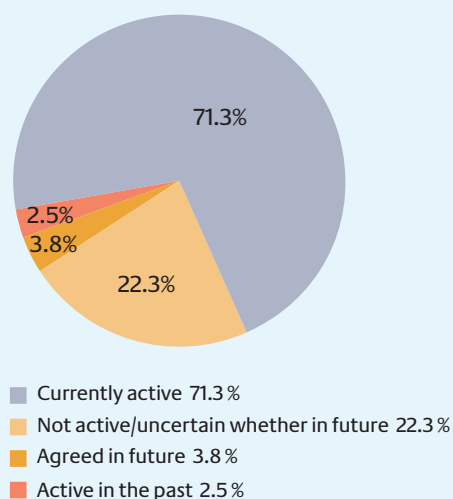
A study by Kassel University (Prof. Dr Fred Karl) shows that “*senior trainers*” not only meet with open doors when establishing cooperation relationships, but they also have to overcome obstacles. The “*senior expertise teams*”, who facilitate access to cooperation partners and fields of action, have a supportive effect.

What consequences does the Federal Model Programme have for the involvement of older people overall? A study by the German Centre for Issues relating to Old Age (DZA) (Dr Peter Zeman) investigates this question and identifies structures for the lasting support of the involvement of older people.

The results of the three research projects will be published on the EFI website at the end of 2006.

**Activity as “Senior Trainer”**

2003 Course in Practice (N = 157)



#### Further information:

Detailed results of the evaluation  
can be found on the website  
[www.seniortrainer.de](http://www.seniortrainer.de)

## The knowledge gained through experience of older people – a contribution to inter-generational cohesion

An important feature of the “*senior* trainer” role is its orientation across the ages. “*Senior* trainers” become involved for all age groups and not just senior citizens. They also become active with and for children and young people and pass on their knowledge gained through experience to the younger generation in many projects and initiatives. “*Senior* trainers” promote the dialogue and transfer of knowledge between the generations and thus make an important contribution to more understanding and cohesion between the generations.

### Dialogue between the generations

Under the motto “Old for Young: a Plus for All”, the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth launched a nationwide image campaign in November 2004. The campaign informed the general public about the work of “*senior* trainers” and, at the same time, promoted positive coexistence of the generations. As part of the campaign, advertisements were placed in selected high-circulation print media throughout Germany. In this way, the image of old age was to be made more positive in the public. At the same time, the campaign helped to show the great diversity of voluntary involvement by introducing the daily work of the “*senior* trainers” to the public.



Visiting group from Valencia finding out about the EFL concept in Cologne

In the search for a “*senior* trainer” who could represent the Model Programme the Ministry organised a nationwide casting among the active “*senior* trainers” in 2004. The Federal Ministry received over 90 applications, all of which contained interesting projects. The choice ultimately fell on Martin Langer, who has been involved as a “*senior* trainer” in his programme “Prevention – Ways Out of Violence” for two years. The 66-



year-old conducts prevention training in school classes. Martin Langer discusses experience of violence with nine- to fourteen-year-old pupils and, together with them, develops conflict-free solutions to typical violent situations.

The involvement of Martin Langer is not a one-off. He represents many “*senior trainers*” who involve themselves with younger generations in particular: Mentor programmes for schoolchildren in Erfurt, job application training for general secondary school pupils, involvement advice for female students, advice to associations and youth initiatives – these are just a few of the projects developed and initiated by “*senior trainers*”.

Bundesministerium  
für Familie, Senioren, Frauen  
und Jugend

# Alt für Jung: ein Plus für alle.

Martin Langer, senior Trainer,  
engagiert: Präventionsmaßnahmen  
gegen Gewalt an Schulen.

Gemeinsam läuft's besser! Ein Beispiel des vielfältigen Engagements von seniorTrainerinnen und seniorTrainern: [www.poteniale-des-alters.de](http://www.poteniale-des-alters.de)

**seniorTrainerin**  
Erfahrungswissen für Initiativen

## “Good Practice”: Positive responses from abroad

The concept for the use of the knowledge gained through experience of older people is well received in the international context. The most extensive programme internationally, “Experience for Initiatives” met with a very positive response at various conferences at home and abroad. The EFI specialist conferences in 2005 and 2006 provided information about the activities to promote the involvement of older people in other European countries and the USA. Specific project ideas have been developed thanks to increased international exchange.

Here are a few examples:

### **Participation in the EU transfer project “LACE”**

The concept for the use of the knowledge gained through experience of older people is one of three good-practice examples whose concept elements should be implemented in other European countries as part of the European project “Lifelong Learning and Active Citizenship in Europe’s Ageing Society” (LACE, 2005 – 2007). One result will be an international guideline for establishing promotion programmes for the involvement of older people.

### **International guests in Cologne**

In November 2005 the Spanish “Foundation for Solidarity and Voluntary Work of the Valencian Community” informed itself from “senior trainers” in Cologne about the local implementation of the concept.

### **International exchange of “senior trainers”**

Together with the Volunteers’ Centre Hanover, “senior trainers” conducted a two-day exchange with elderly volunteers from the SESAM Academie in the Netherlands.



International guests at the 4<sup>th</sup> EFI conference in Würzburg

### Application of the concept in Switzerland, Austria and Finland

The most recent example of the rising international response is the introduction of the pilot project “innovage” in Switzerland and current plans for a pilot project in Austria. A further training course for “*senior* trainers” has already been successfully started in Finland.

### Presentation of the EFI programme in Brazil

The 18th Congress of the International Association of Gerontology took place in Rio de Janeiro under the title „Active Ageing in the 21st Century – Participation, Health and Security”; around 4,000 academics from all over the world took part. The Federal Model Programme “Experience for Initiatives” met with lively interest by the international audience at two events.

#### EFI programme on the internet:

[www.seniortrainer.de](http://www.seniortrainer.de)  
[www.isab-institut.de](http://www.isab-institut.de)  
[www.bmfsfj.bund.de](http://www.bmfsfj.bund.de)

## Further information

Work aids for application of the concept for using the knowledge gained through experience of older people (can be obtained from the ISAB Institute or as a download from [www.seniortrainer.de](http://www.seniortrainer.de)):

- Bischoff, S./Braun, J./Olbermann, E. (Ed.): Leitfaden für die Nutzung des Erfahrungswissens Älterer als *senior-Trainerinnen* und in *senior*Kompetenzteams, ISAB-Berichte No. 90
- Burmeister, J./Heller, A./Stehr, I.: Weiterbildung älterer Menschen für bürgerschaftliches Engagement als *seniorTrainerinnen*. Ein Kurskonzept für lokale Netzwerke, ISAB-Berichte No. 91
- PR-Handbuch zur Öffentlichkeitsarbeit für das Engagement von *seniorTrainerinnen*, ISAB-Berichte No. 92
- Braun, J./Kubisch, S./Zeman, P. (Hrsg.): Erfahrungswissen und Verantwortung – zur Rolle von *seniorTrainerinnen* in ausgewählten Engagementbereichen, ISAB-Berichte No. 89

The five specialist conferences are comprehensively documented on the website [www.seniortrainer.de](http://www.seniortrainer.de) in the area “EFI-Fachtagungen”.

Interim report on the first Model Programme Phase:

Braun, J./Burmeister, J./Engels, D. (Hrsg.): *SeniorTrainerin*: Neue Verantwortungsrolle und Engagement in Kommunen, ISAB-Berichte No. 84

Final report on the Federal Model Programme:

Braun, J./Burmeister, J./Engels, D. (Hrsg.): Abschlussbericht zum Bundesmodellprogramm “Erfahrungswissen für Initiativen” (to be published in mid-2006)





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